
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Figure 54: A business near Findlay Market.

The economic health of Over-the-Rhine is critical to its long-term success. Improving economic conditions in the neighborhood results not only in developing the climate for doing business and investing money, but improves conditions for people in the neighborhood as well. In order for area residents to improve their lives, they need to have access to good jobs at sustainable income levels that will allow them to increase their personal wealth. In order to attract investment, property values will need to increase, and business investments will need to provide a return in the community.

OTR has many economic assets. Its location adjacent downtown, and just south of the University-Medical complex positions it between the two largest employment centers in the region. The neighborhood is also home to a number of regional destinations like Music Hall, the Ensemble Theatre, and the Pendleton Arts Center. The neighborhood has not been able to fully capitalize on these destinations and the potential spin-off retail activity that could result from patrons dining or shopping in the neighborhood.

Findlay Market, a large city market operating in the neighborhood since 1852, provides fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, cheeses, and breads, including many hard to find ethnic foods, to OTR residents and people from all over the region.

With its many economic assets, this historic 19th century neighborhood has positioned itself very well to take advantage of 21st century opportunities.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Figure 55: Mixed-use buildings on Main Street.

Improving the climate for business in the neighborhood and nurturing existing and new economic activity is critical to OTR. Many of the elements for a robust economy are already present in the neighborhood. The successes of the Main Street Entertainment District and the technology industry demonstrate that OTR has the elements essential for creating a healthy business environment.

Space for Business Development

OTR has almost 500 vacant buildings and over 700 vacant lots. These vacancies, which can be more reasonably priced than traditional office space (although renovation costs may be significant), provide the opportunity for businesses to locate to the neighborhood, establish themselves, and expand. Real estate in distinctive, architecturally significant buildings offers a very special opportunity for many businesses. In fact, many in the technology industry cited the uniqueness of the community as one of the reasons for selecting OTR as home. OTR provides a locale where businesses can be close to the area's hub of economic activity, and employees can live close to where they work.

The presence of the high-speed internet capacity in OTR is also a tremendous asset. This presents a real advantage in the neighborhood over many other locations not as well served by digital infrastructure. This is certainly one of the reasons that technology-based businesses were attracted to the neighborhood, but increasingly all types of businesses will see this infrastructure advantage as attractive.

Economic Empowerment and Job Opportunities

The emergence of business opportunities in the information technology field has opened up new avenues of employment as well. Local groups such as SmartMoney Community Services, Hamilton County Development Corporation, Greater Cincinnati Microenterprise Initiative (GCMI), the University of Cincinnati Small Business Development Center (UCSBDC), the African American Chamber of Commerce, and the Cincinnati Business Incubator provide training and other opportunities for interested residents to take advantage of these new digital, technology-based opportunities.

Since local schools play an important role in preparing students for jobs in this field, Taft High School, in conjunction with Cincinnati Bell, has designated Taft as a special site for computer training. An additional high school, chartered by the Cincinnati Public Schools and the Gates Foundation, will become an Entrepreneurial High School which will focus on training students to create and get involved in new start-up businesses. This high school will be operational in the neighborhood for the 2003-2004 school year.

One of the most critical issues for neighborhood residents is identification and creation of better job opportunities that will provide entrance to the economic mainstream. The lack of opportunities today revolves around the scarcity of economic activity in the neighborhood, need for access to capital, insufficient transportation to jobs, deficient education, discrimination, day care and health care problems, and individual problems with criminal background and employment histories. Creating opportunities and second chances for many people facing these difficulties is critical if this neighborhood is to truly provide the kind of mixed-income and culturally and racially diverse environment that is envisioned.

Resources like the new entrepreneurial high school, Taft's information technology program, the local groups who provide assistance to small businesses, the City's Employment and Training Center, and the Collective Learning Center can all play a role in this issue. Linking these and many other services to the people who need them and to each other is key to making the existing system work.

Proximity to Downtown and Uptown

Downtown Cincinnati remains the largest employment location in the region with approximately 90,000 employees (Source: Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce). The University of Cincinnati and the medical complex made up of University Medical Center, Children's Hospital, Shriners' Burn Center, the Veteran's Administration Medical Center, and Christ Hospital is the second largest employment center (Direct jobs, 1997 UC Medical Center Report). OTR is just minutes away from both with direct public transit and vehicular access.

These locations help drive OTR's economy by creating potential spin-off business and institutional activities looking for proximate locations. They also provide potential jobs for local and future residents who want to live close to where they work. Better transportation integration between these destinations in the downtown Basin and Uptown area are discussed in some detail in the Transportation chapter of this plan.



Figure 56: Vine Street in the early 20th century. Photo courtesy of the Department of Transportation and Engineering.



Figure 57: Vine Street in the early 21st century - Local business Rohs Hardware.

The Vine Street Corridor

Just as OTR is the best and worst of the City, Vine Street is the best and the worst of the neighborhood. The condition of Vine Street is, to many, symbolic of the overall health of the neighborhood. Its image is what shapes people's impressions of OTR; as a major corridor between downtown and the University area, thousands of people travel it daily. Mayor Luken has made Vine Street the center of a strategy to signal the resurgence of the entire community.

Vine Street has historically been the primary roadway in the neighborhood, and the buildings and past uses on the street are evidence of this. The architecture of buildings on the street is high-style – buildings are a little taller with more elegant storefronts, they are made of sturdier, more expensive materials such as brick and masonry, and are more elaborate and detailed than buildings on other streets (which can also increase the cost of rehabilitation). The function of the street was both cultural and civic; Vine Street has been home to beer gardens, a post office, an opera house, and a movie theatre.

A perfect example of OTR's pattern of development, the street has been a commercial corridor with some residential uses interspersed between and above commercial uses. From clothes to food to music to hardware, Vine Street has been the central shopping street in the neighborhood. It is also a place where building vacancies, trash, loitering, and drug dealing make the corridor feel very unsafe. The issues of making the neighborhood feel clean and safe are very important to the revitalization of Vine Street.

The Success of Main Street as a Destination

The Main Street Arts and Entertainment District has been, by most accounts, a model of what the community can accomplish in terms of revitalization. The Over-the-Rhine Chamber of Commerce and the Over-the-Rhine Foundation, along with the many individual building and business owners, have created a unique and attractive destination for restaurants, clubs, galleries, and special shopping. This revitalization was certainly bolstered by the many technology-based companies and residential units that have located on the street. Many of the elements identified as attractive for technology companies are also attractive for other users on Main Street, such as interesting historic architecture, proximity to other users, and a pedestrian-scale environment.

Neighborhood business districts that have been successful at re-making themselves have had several key elements:

- Creation of an identified niche and image
- One or two “destination” uses
- A mix of uses that focuses on special offerings and high levels of service (something the big-boxes do not do well)
- Business owners who collaborate on issues like hours of operation, marketing and promotions, and festivals
- A positive physical environment

Many of these elements are present on Main Street, and have been key to its success. Main Street, however, like the rest of the neighborhood, suffers from the real and perceived lack of safety in the area. There have also been some problems with patrons of the clubs being unruly in the early hours of the morning and causing problems in the neighborhood. Here, too, residents have not always felt welcome. The ability of the entire neighborhood to take advantage of the successes of parts of the neighborhood will be important to the long-term sustainability of the neighborhood.



Figure 58: Jump Café, on the corner of Main Street and 12th Street.



Figure 59: Kaldi's Coffeehouse and Bookstore, a popular attraction on Main Street. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.



Figure 60: The Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati.



Figure 61: Music Hall during a May Festival performance. Photo courtesy of Cincinnati May Festival.

Core of Cultural Destinations and Institutions

Music Hall, Findlay Market, the Ensemble Theatre, and Pendleton Arts Center are the types of cultural and community resources that communities often attempt to create in revitalization efforts. OTR has these and several other truly outstanding resources, which have existed here for generations. In addition to these well-established resources, there are proposals to create a new School for the Creative and Performing Arts near Music Hall, and a new home for the Art Academy of Cincinnati at Twelfth and Jackson Streets. These uses draw patrons, guests, artists, and residents into the neighborhood. They also provide opportunities for residents to become involved in and experience wonderful cultural offerings.

Residents have sometimes felt unwelcome at these institutions and so they may not have benefited the neighborhood as fully as possible. Likewise, patrons have not felt welcomed in the neighborhood and so did not stay to have lunch, dinner, shop, or spend additional money in the area. These institutions are an important part of the neighborhood. Their presence needs to be enhanced and they need to be open for neighborhood residents to take advantage of the rich cultural experiences they have to offer. Likewise, the neighborhood needs to accept these institutions and create strategies that create economic activity to build upon these uses and their patrons.

The Need for Neighborhood-Serving Uses

In 1950, there were 31,219 people living in the neighborhood; today there are less than 7,500. That loss of population has had a direct negative impact on the number of businesses in the neighborhood, particularly in the retail sector. In this regard, OTR is like thousands of other center-city neighborhoods across the country. As people have left city neighborhoods for farther-out suburban locations, they have left old neighborhood business districts with fewer customers, buying less.

The trend of disinvestment in city neighborhoods is blamed on many things: perceptions of security problems, poor store selection, increased competition from suburban malls and big box stores, old merchandise, and lack of parking. All are certainly in part to blame, but the beginning of the downward trend can be tied directly to population movement to the suburbs.

The retail market in areas like grocery stores, drug stores, shoe and apparel shops, gas stations, car repair establishments, restaurants, laundries and dry cleaners, and other neighborhood-serving uses have largely relocated to the suburbs along major roadways like Beechmont Avenue and Colerain Avenue, and I-275. This exodus has been so complete in some cases that retailers are finding suburban locations over-built and are now looking for new service areas back in center-city locations. The recent activities of chains like CVS and Walgreen's illustrate this point.

*Figure 62: Local store
Globe Furniture, located at
Findlay Market.*



Figure 63: Local apparel store Smitty's.



Figures 64 and 65: Two successful OTR businesses - Ollie's Trolley on Liberty Street and Shadeau Breads on Main Street. Photos courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.



People shop differently than they did when neighborhood business districts were the main destinations for convenience shopping trips. Today, people are likely to do all their shopping at big-box retailers like Target, K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Kroger, Biggs, and others. Instead of shopping at the local butcher or florist, they are now getting everything from furniture to eggs at one location. Often prices are more competitive at these locations and shopping can be more convenient, particularly for those with cars who live nearby. The need for people in the neighborhood to have access to good shopping choices for everyday needs has been identified as important to OTR residents.

There are some examples of stores that have stayed and been successful in the neighborhood. Places like Tucker's Restaurant, Rohs Hardware, Smitty's, Deveroes, and the many merchants at Findlay Market have served the neighborhood for decades. Supporting these businesses and attracting new neighborhood-serving uses will be an important challenge.

Residents identified an expanded grocery store, a movie theater, additional restaurants, some sort of family entertainment (bowling, skating, etc.), drug store, laundry and dry cleaners as some of the uses the neighborhood needs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Make OTR a model for diverse and inclusive business development.

Objectives:

- Strengthen neighborhood retail uses on Vine Street and throughout the neighborhood
- Provide support to a variety of office users including technology-based companies, architectural, arts and other design firms
- Maximize the support and development of digital and technology related business in the community
- Coordinate and enhance small business and microenterprise support programs
- Focus marketing of retail space around Findlay Market for local, specialty, and international food products and services

Goal 2: Establish stronger linkages between the OTR workforce and job training programs and employment opportunities in the neighborhood and throughout the City.

Objectives:

- Create opportunities in industries where OTR has a competitive advantage such as historic building trades, the arts and crafts industry, and food service and products at Findlay Market
- Establish an educational link between technology-based businesses, neighborhood schools and the Employment and Training Center
- Improve transportation options to employment centers throughout the region, including support for Metro Moves

Goal 3: Strengthen and create destinations that attract and encourage neighborhood and regional participation.

Objectives:

- Support regional arts organizations in the neighborhood and maximize their direct economic benefit to the neighborhood
- Use cultural resources to attract people to neighborhood restaurants and other establishments

- Enhance Findlay Market as a regional destination by expanding the Market and targeting renovation of the surrounding buildings
- Support the Main Street Entertainment District as a regional destination that is welcoming to local residents and serves as a neighborhood gathering place
- Provide strong pedestrian links between the Pendleton Arts Center, Main Street, Vine Street and Music Hall along 13th Street
- Enhance the safety of the neighborhood to encourage people to use the resources of the area
- Enhance the grocery offerings in the vicinity of Findlay Market to improve convenience shopping for residents and visitors
- Create safe, clean and maintained “pocket parking lots” throughout the neighborhood focusing on the commercial corridors on Vine Street and Findlay Market, with an additional structured lot in the vicinity of Main Street
- Create a coordinated marketing program to promote the diverse arts, cultural and other destinations on the neighborhood

Goal 4: Ensure the opportunity for OTR residents to become financially literate and independent

Objectives

- Create opportunities for homeownership in the neighborhood
- Make use of SmartMoney Community Services and other local financial training programs
- Provide strong educational institutions
- Support local financial institutions that recycle dollars in the neighborhood

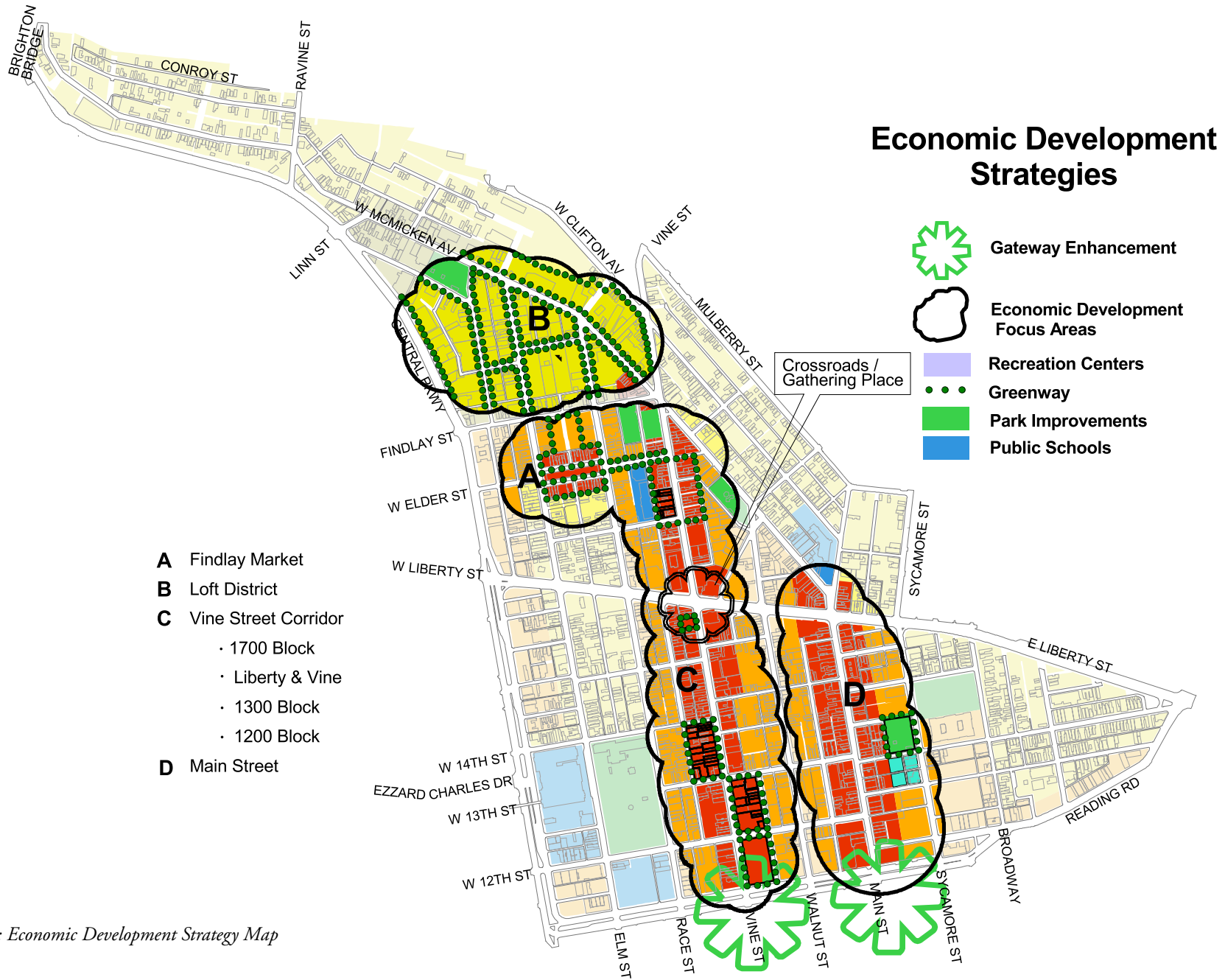


Figure 66: Economic Development Strategy Map

KEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS



Figure 67: Vine Street between Elder and Green Streets. By Consultant - Design Team.

Vine Street Revitalization

Vine Street was, at one time, the center of activity in OTR. The future of Vine Street should be no different, acting as the center of neighborhood-serving retail uses. The neighborhood is in need of a place for residents to buy a newspaper, an ice cream cone or lunch. Vine Street should again be the center of that kind of activity.

There are a number of targeted improvement projects and programs that will focus activity on Vine Street:

Neighborhood Pride Center

In order to expedite business development and City processes, area residents and businesses will have access to a Neighborhood Pride Center on Vine Street. The Center will be staffed with City employees from various departments who will be able to address service requests, development needs, business retention issues, and other City issues. The office will also be the home of the Vine Street Coordinator, who will assist existing OTR businesses, and attract potential businesses to OTR, particularly to Vine Street.

Façade Program and Smart Streets Program

A Vine Street façade improvement program coordinated through the City's Department of Community Development will renovate up to ten facades in 2002 and 2003. Additionally, the Smart Streets program, developed by the University of Cincinnati, will address lead issues in the area.

Mixed Use Project Redevelopment

In addition to the façade program, there are a number of other development projects that will be implemented on Vine Street between 2002 and 2004. These include renovations in the 1700 block, housing and commercial renovations in the 1200 and 1300 blocks, and the restoration of the Empire Theater at 1521 Vine Street. These renovation projects will generate activity along the length of Vine Street and establish the foundations for further private sector investment in the neighborhood.

Pocket Parking Lots

Parking for new and expanded retail, residential, and office uses on Vine Street will be provided in a series of “pocket parking lots” along the corridor. These improvements will be accompanied by streetscape improvements including street trees, planters, and flowers.

Site assembly and the completion of various projects, streetscape improvements, and a façade program are just a few of the implementation measures that will be targeted toward Vine Street. The Economic Development Strategy Map identifies several areas to target for rehabilitation of existing buildings and the creation of “pocket parking lots”. Sites were selected because of availability, location at key intersections, and in the case of building rehabilitations, the opportunity for some parking. In addition to these redevelopment activities, Vine Street should be the focus of concentrated city service delivery and code enforcement, coordinated through the Neighborhood Pride Center.



Figures 68 and 69: The Empire Theatre in its current condition (above), and with proposed renovations (below). Illustration courtesy of La Shawn Pettus-Brown.

Develop Job Training Linkages

One of the neighborhood's most important economic concerns is how to provide jobs and job training opportunities in ways that stimulate new economic activity and address current resident needs. There are a number of job training programs and educational opportunities currently available in the neighborhood, such as the City's Department of Employment and Training, City of Cincinnati Department of Community Development, Cincinnati Business Incubator, SmartMoney Community Services, Greater Cincinnati Microenterprise Initiative, University of Cincinnati Small Business Development Center, SCORE (Retired Executives), Hamilton County Development Company, Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky African-American Chamber of Commerce, Taft High School's technology training program and the proposed entrepreneurial high school. These institutions, and others in the neighborhood, provide services that can be better marketed and linked to educational opportunities.

Transportation is an important part of creating the network of support needed for someone to have access to available jobs. Many of the jobs in this region are not located downtown or within the City of Cincinnati. Good public transportation that connects OTR residents with jobs in Hamilton, or even Butler, Warren, Boone Counties or other locations is key. The Metro Moves plan and other methods of improving transportation options for residents is an important step in improving economic opportunity.

Create Entrepreneurial Opportunities

This Plan recommends the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities for people in a number of industry areas.

Historic Building Trades

Business development in historic building trades is recommended. Lead abatement is one area of the construction process for which there

seems to be a shortage of firms and contractors working in the neighborhood. Given the significant redevelopment that is recommended, this may be a good industry segment to begin to develop. UC and the City are sponsoring the "Smart Streets Program," which will provide a good opportunity to develop this idea further. Additional opportunities in the neighborhood similar to the paint reformulation business or the fabrication of historic windows are also options.

Support the Kitchen Incubator

The Kitchen Incubator provides the infrastructure for the development of entrepreneurship in the food products and services area. It allows a neighborhood resident to move from making jam for friends at holiday time, to selling jams at the market, to selling to a wider market. The incubator, "Cincinnati Cooks" trains residents in food service areas, supports job creation, and gives existing culinary businesses a place to start or expand.

Develop the Food Ventures Center at Findlay Market

The development of a shared-use commercial kitchen incubator provides entrepreneurs with time-share access to licensed production facilities and the opportunity to start and expand specialty food and catering businesses. The kitchen incubator would also offer entrepreneurs access to capital, training and technical assistance that is essential for start-up businesses. Properly executed, the facility could also be used for job training for area residents in the food service industry.

Develop Arts Industries

The development of an arts and crafts industry can take advantage of the skills of residents. Quilting, jewelry making, woodworking, and other guild arts are being practiced recreationally by OTR residents. A vendor space recommendation is designed to provide an outlet for residents to sell these products, with a possible location for a vendor mall on Race Street near Findlay Market.

The Loft District

There are a number of buildings north of Findlay Street and south of and along McMicken Avenue that once housed breweries and food processing facilities. Since these buildings originally housed large-scale commercial and industrial businesses, they are well suited for open loft spaces with the flexibility to adapt to changing market needs. These buildings could house a variety of modern uses, including historic building trades, dot.com expansions, and other office, commercial, and housing uses.

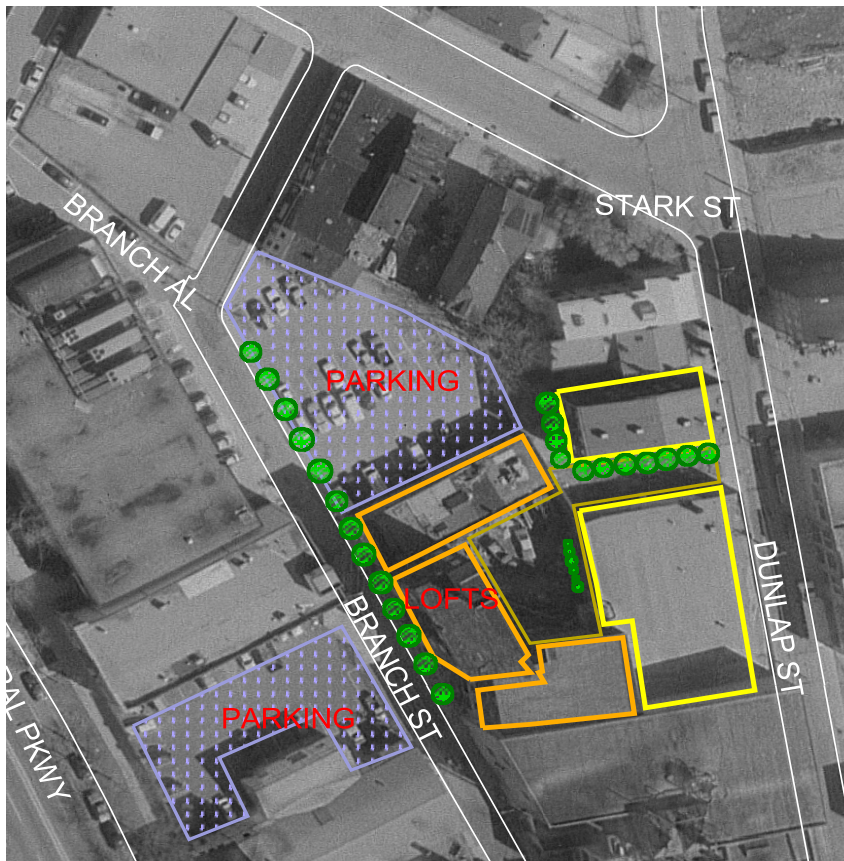


Figure 70: An example of a site plan for a loft development on Branch Street. For illustrative purposes only.



Figures 71 and 72: Two buildings in the Loft District that are prime candidates for conversion to mixed-use loft space. For illustrative purposes only.





Figures 73 and 74: The same two buildings after rehabilitation and conversion to loft space.

Findlay Market Revitalization

Findlay Market is a center of economic activity and a primary destination in the neighborhood for both residents of and visitors to the community. In 1995, the City adopted the Findlay Market Master Business Development Plan that recommended the revitalization of Findlay Market. Since adoption of the Plan, a number of capital

projects have significantly enhanced the visual appearance of the Market District and have created additional opportunities for new business creation. Continued implementation of the Findlay Master Plan, including the development of the Food Ventures Center, renovation of additional parking areas, and creation of additional outdoor vending opportunities, is encouraged.



Figure 75: A rendering of the proposed renovation of the Market House. Illustration courtesy of Glaserworks.



Figure 76: A rendering of proposed improvements to Pleasant Street. Illustration courtesy of Glaserworks.

Mixed-use renovation of buildings in the Market District is an important part of the Market Renovation Project, and the success of the Market depends greatly on the activation of these buildings. These buildings are targeted for renovation with food-related retail uses on the ground floors and residential uses above. The City has begun to make strategic purchases of property in the area to facilitate this component of the project.



Figure 77: Improvements being made to the buildings surrounding the Market House.

Support Technology-based Investments

The neighborhood has attracted a significant number of technology-based businesses and there is a need for continued support of those investments. Capital investments including upgraded telecommunications facilities, smart buildings, and support for other technology-based infrastructure will be important to ensure that OTR can nurture these types of new businesses.

Create Additional Parking

There are two main parking recommendations; the first is to build two additional structured parking lots to serve the many patrons of the neighborhood. One is recommended near the Main Street Arts and Entertainment District, and another near Music Hall.

Secondly, safe, clean and maintained pocket parking lots are recommended along Vine Street and in a number of other locations throughout the neighborhood. The notion behind the “pocket parking lot” is that it is a small lot providing enough parking for specific uses in an area. These parking lots will not disrupt the overall streetscape, and should be placed in existing vacant lots whenever possible. The plan map illustrates several potential locations.

These two recommendations should help the many parking needs of resident, employee, and customer parking during both day and night.



Figure 78: Students working in a computer class. Photo courtesy of the Art Academy of Cincinnati.

PRIORITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the Economic Development recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Phase One Committed Projects To be completed by 2004

Façade Improvement Program

Smart Streets/ Lead Remediation

10 Buildings funded for façade improvements, lead work and retail space improvements

City investment:

\$300,000 Façade

\$92,162 lead abatement

\$396,000 additional lead grant from HUD (pending)

Total public investment: \$788,162

Scheduled completion: Winter 2002

Neighborhood Pride Center

Includes offices of Vine Street Coordinator

Coordination of Police, Buildings, Public Services Economic Development, and other City services (a commitment to Clean and Safe in OTR)

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Findlay Market, Market House Expansion and Public Improvements
Expansion will double the size of the market and add food vendor space

City Investment: \$12,000,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2003

Neighborhood Craft Market

Outdoor Vendor Space for residents to sell homemade crafts at Findlay Market

Anticipated investment: \$50,000

Scheduled completion: Summer of 2003

Empire Theater Renovation

Theater Renovation for live music and arts performances

City Investment: \$150,000

Private and State of Ohio Investment: \$850,000

Scheduled completion: End of 2002

1700 Block of Vine Target Renovations

City providing site assembly and building stabilization

RFP to be issued in summer 2002 to include proposals for rehabilitation and in-fill construction at 1701,03,05,07 – 1712,1714,1718 – 1721,23,25, and 1735,37,39.

City investment and private investment to be determined

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Streetscape and Parking Enhancements on Vine Street

Installation of street trees, landscape planters, and flower boxes

Improvements to various parking lots

City Investment: \$20,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Food Venture Center at Findlay Market

Shared use commercial kitchen located at 1638 Central Parkway

(city-owned facility)

FDA and USDA certified facility

Entrepreneurial development for food-based businesses

\$3,000,000 facility

Anticipated partners; City, State, Federal and Private Sources

Summary of Economic Development Investments

City Investment: \$12,520,000

The majority of these investments are on public facilities and infrastructure and do not have accompanying private investments.

Those projects that will also include private investment are currently being developed.

SAFETY



Figure 79: Improving police-community relations is key to safety and perception of safety in OTR. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

During the planning process, members of all the Issue Committees spent dozens of hours discussing potential strategies to achieve the goals of the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. More often than not, however, committee members came to the conclusion that no strategy would be truly successful if OTR is not perceived to be a safe, clean place where people want to live and do business.

Perception is, indeed, the key. While it is of the utmost importance for the neighborhood to actually *be* safe and clean, it is also important for residents, workers and visitors to *feel* safe, and for outsiders in the Cincinnati region to think of OTR as a secure neighborhood.

For that reason, although no one Issue Committee addressed safety, the issue deserves special attention in a separate section. The Goals and Objectives in this section were actually derived from a discussion in the Quality of Life Committee; and the strategies were culled from various groups: the Quality of Life Committee, the Planning Steering Committee, the Over-the-Rhine Safety Committee, and the Cincinnati CAN (Community Action Now) Commission. The strategies suggested in this section are only a starting point. The OTR Safety Committee, the Plan Implementation Committee, the Cincinnati Police Department and other community groups must constantly monitor their progress in this area and change or add strategies when necessary.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Police/Community Relations

After the events of April 2001, the relationship between the Cincinnati Police Department and the OTR neighborhood has been somewhat tenuous, and sometimes hostile. Since the disturbances, there have been numerous studies, debates and judgments brought forward to suggest systemic changes to the manner in which the Police interact with the community and the manner in which the community interacts with the Police. The Cincinnati Police Department has taken a considerable hit in the theatre of public opinion, but has also been defended on several occasions for the dangerous and thankless job officers perform. Civic and religious leaders have been careful to point out that, as is true in any group of people, there are bound to be some who are less than fair, less than honorable, but that the majority of officers want to do a good job where they professionally and respectfully interact with the community. These leaders, including the CAN Commission and the OTR Safety Committee, are working directly with the Cincinnati Police to address the issues of police-community relations.

Crime and Perception of Crime

Crime is one of the central issues in the neighborhood, as all of the strategies suggested for improving the neighborhood depend on OTR being a safe neighborhood for everyone. Crime associated with drugs and drug trafficking pervades the neighborhood and the nature of this activity has become increasingly violent.

Fighting crime is only part of the equation; the other part is preventing crime and making the neighborhood unattractive for criminals. Physical improvements and additional development are an important part of preventing crime. Some issues directly related to crime, such as building vacancies, adequate lighting and neighborhood ap-

pearance can be addressed through this plan. Additionally, there are steps residents can take to address the issues of crime and incivility in the neighborhood. Some residents and employees take ownership in the community by cleaning the public areas in front of their buildings and telling loiterers that they are not welcome. A strong relationship between area residents and the Police will ultimately be important in addressing the issue of crime in this neighborhood.

Appearance of the Neighborhood

While some parts of OTR are well cared for, other pockets in the community have abundant litter, overgrown weeds, dilapidated and vacant buildings, abandoned cars and broken glass. Poor lighting, unattractive parking lots and the lack of a uniform design scheme only accentuates these problems. It will be an ongoing challenge for all community stakeholders to rid the neighborhood of these conditions. The opportunity lies in the positive benefits that can result from such an effort. The ongoing effort to rid the neighborhood of blight will not only improve the appearance, but will also make the neighborhood less attractive for criminals, safer for children to play, more attractive to businesses and friendlier to pedestrians.



Figure 80: Broken windows in a building on Race Street. Photo courtesy of Ken Cunningham and Associates.

SAFETY GOAL AND OBJECTIVES



Figure 81: Shoppers on Main Street. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

Goal 1: OTR will be safe, clean and visually appealing for residents and visitors

Objectives

- Make OTR free from litter and other unnecessary debris
- Improve the perception of the neighborhood's safety
- Foster a culture of mutual respect between community and police



*Figures 82 and 83: Litter and dilapidated buildings in OTR.
Photos courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.*



KEY SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvement in the Neighborhood's Appearance

Litter, dilapidated buildings and other physical disorder are common complaints in any neighborhood, but they seem to be more of a challenge in OTR. The neighborhood's appearance can be improved through the dedication of residents, property owners and city departments.

First and foremost, all residents of OTR must take responsibility for one small piece of the neighborhood, whether it is their block or just the area in front of their home. Responsibility does not mean just cleaning up the area, although that is certainly part of it. Residents must act territorially as well. This means asking people not to litter and pointing out that someone else will have to clean it up if they do. Residents, businesses and the Community Council can also take advantage of programs offered through Keep Cincinnati Beautiful.

Property owners, especially those who own rental property and do not live or work on the premises, must be especially attentive to the upkeep of their property. While residents are asked to take ownership of their surroundings, if they are renters, they will not be able to accomplish this unless they live in buildings that are structurally sound with attractive interiors and facades and well-kept grounds.

City departments such as Litter Patrol, the Police Department, and Buildings and Inspections also must be contacted regularly to report illegal dumping, abandoned cars and unsafe buildings. City departments must then respond to those reports. The Department of Buildings and Inspections has developed a list of deteriorated buildings and has indicated that they are willing to fund the demolition of some of these buildings. The Department of Public Services, who already focuses a great deal of attention in OTR, have increased their services in OTR through city crews and private contracts. Additional trash cans in heavily traveled areas will help to encourage proper disposal of litter and these trash cans must be collected regularly to prevent them from overflowing. In addition to cleaning up areas of disorder, many other efforts can be taken to beautify the neighborhood, as was discussed in the Quality of Life chapter.

Rebuilding Trust Between Community and Police

Cincinnati CAN has recently unveiled a list of recommendations to improve police-community relations. These recommendations, as well as all others suggested for the city as a whole, should and will be tailored to the OTR neighborhood in order to respect neighborhood wisdom and derive maximum effectiveness. Some of the components of the plan which have been well received in other City neighborhoods, and which are being presented to OTR for consideration, are as follows.

Ministerial/Grass Roots Outreach with Police – This faith-based initiative aims to build a bridge between the Police Department and the OTR neighborhood, with ministers and grass roots organization leaders as the link. Hopefully, this relationship between police and community leaders will be the beginning of a dialogue between the residents and the police.

Community Safety Initiative - This type of program, such as the one facilitated through LISC, concentrate on creating change through relationships between police and community development corporations. This allows an association to be formed between crime prevention and suppression and economic development activities. This type of program ties these two important activities together. As was stated at the beginning of the chapter, safety, the perception of safety and economic development are interrelated in OTR. If police and community development corporations were to form a bond, they would likely find that they have common goals and work together to achieve them.

Respectful, Safe Encounters Between Police and Community - Building a culture of mutual respect between community and officers.



Figure 84: OTR kids having fun in the summertime. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.



Figure 85: A crowd gathers at a festival on Main Street. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

Focus on Neighborhood Youth

For any safety strategy to be successful, special attention must be given to young people in the neighborhood, in particular age 25 and younger. These Cincinnati CAN initiatives are particularly targeted at youth and young adults:

Youth Street Workers – Two part-time workers would work with youth in an informal setting on the streets, at recreation areas and other places where young people are known to congregate. These street workers would be available to counsel and mentor young people, especially at-risk youth. This position would be ideal for non-traditional workers, perhaps with a minor criminal record or personal experience with gangs, drugs or poverty. These workers would need to be very specialized, since the position requires credibility with young people and police alike.

Mentoring – In partnership with Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, Cincinnati CAN is reaching out to the faith community to find mentors, particularly for the most at-risk youth.

Juvenile Community Court – This program would be available for youth who have been ticketed for a misdemeanor, or in other words, stopped by the police but not arrested. A local magistrate would be assigned to meet approximately two times a month in a location determined by the neighborhood in partnership with Juvenile Court. In their neighborhood surroundings, youth would feel more at ease and could bring their parents, ministers or street workers to participate and help set a response plan. In appropriate cases, the magistrate could hear reasons to take the case off the docket, which can prevent the offense from going on the youth's permanent record. The purpose of this program is to divert at-risk juveniles from drifting further into criminal habits. This program was already proposed in other neighborhoods in Cincinnati, such as the neighborhood of Evanston, which is already operating this program at its neighborhood recreation center.

Unofficial Juvenile Community Court – This hearing setting is even more informal than the one described above. Intended for the same purpose, to divert juveniles and nip criminal behavior in the bud, this program would target a lower level of offense: a non-violent, minor misdemeanor committed by a first time offender. This would include status offenses such as curfew violation. A volunteer attorney would staff the program and hearings would be held at a designated location in the community. In many cases, offenders would be eligible for minor community service as punishment. Such a program is now successfully operating in the neighborhood of Avondale.

Police Activities League – A major tenet of most community policing programs, officers are encouraged to interact with youth on a more personal, social level. Activities can range from taking young people to cultural or sporting events, to helping them with homework or playing a game of pick-up basketball at the recreation center. This would help to build a more positive image of police officers.



Figure 86: A young OTR resident paints a pumpkin at a Main Street festival. Photo courtesy of Julie Fay.

Weed and Seed Type Programming

While Hamilton County already has three neighborhoods (the limit for a jurisdiction of this size) funded by the Department of Justice for a Weed and Seed strategy, a similar type of strategy would be beneficial to the OTR neighborhood. The first element could consist of “weeding” out the narcotics traffickers and violent criminals through increased, more intense law enforcement. Instead of returning criminals to the streets with little or no punishment, local law enforcement agencies could concentrate on suppression, adjudication and prosecution of criminals. The “seeding” element consists of neighborhood restoration, such as economic development activities, improved neighborhood services, and prevention, intervention and treatment activities, such as youth programming and other assistance offered by social service agencies. Holding this all together is a strong community-policing program.

Community Problem-Oriented Policing (CPOP)

Other large communities across the country have embraced the “SARA” model of problem-solving, a method of police training already used in Cincinnati’s Police Academy. CAN’s main goal is work with the Regional Community Policing Institute to train both community members with officers in problem identification (“scanning”), analysis, response and assessment (or “SARA”).

The recent Collaborative Agreement (settling a racial profiling lawsuit) also emphasizes this SARA model. The Collaborative Agreement in addition mandates an interdisciplinary approach where many City departments help citizens and Police implement the agreed-upon response to the jointly-identified safety problem.



Figure 87: A children's recreation area in OTR. Photo courtesy of Kenneth Cunningham and Associates.

PRIORITY SAFETY PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the Safety recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Phase One Committed Projects

Implement the Community Problem-Oriented Policing program

The Police are actively implementing the CPOP program in Over the Rhine and throughout the City

City investment: \$1 Million each year for five years city-wide. Although this investment is city-wide, OTR will receive significant benefit.

Provide Additional Level of Clean-up

The City is currently conducting significant additional clean up activity with city crews and contracting with Impact OTR, New Prospect, and other service providers to provide trash pick-up in vacant lots, on Vine Street and other locations in the neighborhood.

City investment: \$800,000
